

Salvation is by Grace Through Faith

Galatians 3

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For now, open your Bible to Galatians chapter 3, and we come back to this wonderful epistle of Paul written very early in his ministry, the first of his epistles, to confront the constant problem of people corrupting the gospel. People do it because demons do it, because Satan does it. It is the strategy of hell always to corrupt the gospel. The gospel alone saves, and therefore Satan wants to confuse people about the gospel; and he does a very effective job of doing that. The whole world, for sure, lies in darkness when it comes to the matter of the gospel, when it comes to the matter of salvation being right with God. But even as we saw last week, the church, the church of Jesus Christ, including its leaders and its people, are largely bewitched, bewitched by the same false doctrine that holds the world captive – and we looked at that last time.

Today we live in the same kind of world that Paul lived in and the Galatians lived in; it is a world where there's singular truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is revealed on the pages of Holy Scripture: God's plan of salvation through faith alone, apart from works. And there is the endless heresy that salvation comes by works: some works, all works, some ceremonial works, some ritualistic works, some philanthropic works, some moral works, some religious works, but some works. Satan can only corrupt the gospel one way. It is salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works.

So when Satan adds anything to faith alone, that is the corruption of the gospel; and those corruptions basically take almost infinite forms. In fact, in the time in which we live, most people have their own self-styled corruption of the gospel, thinking somehow that God owes them heaven because they're good persons, religious persons, moral persons, philanthropic persons, or they're not criminals. And even if they are criminals, God still owes them heaven because there are worse criminals than they are.

Heresy can only come in the adulteration, the corruption of the gospel. So part of the responsibility, of course, of believers is to

make sure we get the gospel clear, and that we aren't, as we saw last week in chapter 3, verse 1, like the foolish Galatians who were true believers, but had become bewitched. They had become literally bewitched, as if they were under some kind of spell, to accept a false gospel.

Chapter 1, Paul says,

"I can't even believe how soon you are removed from the truth to another gospel, which is not another, when you should know the true gospel. You already believe the true gospel."

He goes on to say,

"Anybody who preaches you any other gospel, let him be damned,"

and he says it twice: chapter 1, verse 8; and chapter 1, verse 9.

But nonetheless, the Galatians who were true believers who had believed the gospel were being foolishly bewitched. We can see that in the opening five verses as we have studied them. And Paul asks them the question:

Look at your experience. You have met Christ. You have vividly seen His death and the significance of His death and resurrection; you have believed that. You have been regenerated by a miracle of God the Father, and you have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. So you have encountered Christ and believed in Him. He has become your Savior and Lord. You have encountered God in the miracles done by the apostles as well as the miracle of your own regeneration. And you have encountered the Holy Spirit who is in you, who leads you, guides you, instructs you, empowers you.

We can also think along the lines of...

"Consequently, you have the full Trinity, and you received that Trinity by faith, not by works. Why are you now foolishly being bewitched by people who tell you that salvation demands works? You already have the full salvation: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Nothing is

left outside. How can you be so foolish to listen to those who tell you lies?"

Who were these liars? Well, we know who they were, because we see them on exhibit in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts. Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren. This is in Jerusalem. They came to Jerusalem in the early church, came from beyond Jerusalem and Judea, and they were teaching; and this is what they were teaching the believers: *"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses you cannot be saved."* So they were basically saying to Gentiles – Jews had already been circumcised, which had no spiritual effect at all. But the Gentiles, they are saying, must be circumcised, or there's no salvation for them.

They went further than that. They also declared, down in verse 5, it is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the law of Moses. This was brought to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. They had a meeting; the meeting is recorded in chapter 15 of Acts. The apostles, the elders got together and they talked about these things, and they said in verse 11, *"We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,"* in the same way they also are.

Salvation is by grace, through faith, apart from works. That is the singular true gospel of Christianity. Anything added to that is damning heresy, bewitching heresy. And unbelievers are bewitched in all kinds of false religions of works, including false forms of Christianity. But as I said last week, and I say again, most, most Christian churches, Protestant churches, are full of bewitched people who accept, even though they were saved by the true gospel, who accept false gospels in their bewitching.

The teaching of Scripture is clear. In the sixteenth chapter of Acts, Paul was talking to the Philippian jailers who said to him, *"What must I do to be saved?"* to which he said,

*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.
Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

In John chapter 1, the apostle John spares no times right out of the blocks, right out of the gates. In chapter 1, he says, *"The*

children of God are those who believe in His name.” In chapter 3, Jesus says, talking to Nicodemus,

“Whoever believes in Him, the Son of Man, will have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting, or eternal, life.”

The Bible always talks about salvation by faith alone, and Paul in Ephesians 2 says that we are saved by faith, not works. Specifically says that: not works. So the devil always adds to the gospel of grace and faith, works, as a necessary means to receive salvation, forgiveness, and heaven.

It is clear, however, from the Scripture that **there are no works by which we can earn righteousness. There are none. All our righteousness is our filthy rags.** We are wretched to the core, to the bone. There is nothing in us that can please God. There is nothing in us that can do anything that honors Him in the way He deserves to be honored by perfect righteousness.

We cannot, therefore, claim that some ceremony or some ritual, whether it's baptism, or the mass, or any other sacrament. We cannot claim that some act of kindness or philanthropy, we cannot claim that some moral quality manifesting itself in some good work is the equivalent of the righteousness that God requires.

Jesus said, *“Be holy, as I am holy,”* because that's what God said in the Old Testament. The only way that we can be holy is if God grants us His holiness, His righteousness; if He reckons it to our accounts, imputes it to our account, or as we read in Romans, credits it to our account. If He gives us His righteousness, and that is the gospel, that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – no works – if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved; that is to be saved from your sin by being forgiven and granted the righteousness of God.